

A MARCH MISTAKE

By Jeanne O. Désesaux

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"Elsie, John Fielding is waiting for you downstairs."

Elsie looked up to see her mother in the door and dropped the warm cloak she was about to put on. She was a quiet, gentle girl, so unassuming that her dark prettiness was more unnoticed than it deserved to be. It had been long since John had come to see her in the old friendly fashion of the time before Rose Lish moved to their town. The girl gave another touch to her smooth hair. Her mother stood watching her and then remarked:

"Mrs. Dent told me today that John and Rose have been out for over a month. He has just come home. If a quarrel with Rose is all that sends him to you, I should think that!"—Elsie wheeled impatiently.

"Mother, John and I have always been good friends, and I shall not question any motive that brings him to see me. I shall always be the same to him. You can't expect a man so deeply in love as he is with Rose to be regular in his attention to his girl friends. And no one could help loving a beauty like Rose. She's good too."

Elsie greeted John as if she had seen him yesterday and soothed his evidently overwrought mood with a gentle, half-laughing tact. He was tall and blond, with fine blue eyes which tonight were clouded, and his face was a little careworn. Sometimes he gave random answers as if he had not heard what she said. After a fair, uneasy hour of the March twilight he turned to her in awkward masculine gratitude for her patience with him.

"Elsie, am I keeping you in? I have not thought to ask if you were going anywhere." She smiled and thought herself that inaction was not good in his present mood.

"I was going for a walk and can go as well another time. I was going quite by myself. You know, I am never afraid."

"No, I never knew you to be afraid from the time we were children at school until now. I have always liked you for that. But would you mind letting me go with you for the walk? We used to like pushing the wind together. Shall we go?"

Elsie put on her cloak and little red cap, and the two young people started away.

Rose lived not far from them, and as they passed the house both could not avoid what they saw. From the broad front windows the light streamed brightly. The shades were not drawn. Rose sat at the piano, and over her in rapt attention stood Norman Cady. John almost dragged Elsie past, though he said nothing. He did not know that he gripped her arm till it hurt and that he was walking at a pace that would have put a less healthy girl than Elsie utterly out of breath.

It was a raw night, with a sharp wind. The moon was high and cold, and the sky was streaked with flying clouds. The road was good, and they walked on and on, out of the town and along the river road. The girl was unwilling to distract her companion's silent mood and swung gladly beside him. At length they reached the boat-house and a great pile of rough logs in a sheltered corner. John stopped here and proposed resting.

"Elise, you're an angel! You have the heart of a sister! You have given her back to me. She did love me. She does! I"—

Elsie smiled and gave him a brave little push.

"Well, you silly boy, go to her this minute!"

He snatched her hand and pressed it hard. Then he went from her with an eager swiftness that he had never shown in coming to her. She knew it—she had always known it, but nevertheless it was not easy to see. And under her breath she whispered bravely:

"The heart of a sister!"

The Robber's Grave at Montgomery.

In a corner of the churchyard of Montgomery, writes a correspondent, is a bare space, known as "the robber's grave." It is not a raised mound of earth, but is below the surrounding ground, which is especially luxuriant. The date of the grave is 1821, and numerous attempts have been made to grow grass upon the bare spot. Fresh soil was frequently spread upon it, but not blade of grass is to be seen. The shape of a cross is still distinctly visible.

It is the grave of a man named Newton, charged with highway robbery and violence and sentenced to be hanged. He protested his innocence. In meek dependence of a merciful God, whom I have offended, but who, through the atonement of his blessed Son, has, I trust, pardoned my offenses, I venture to assert that if I am innocent of the crime for which I suffer the grass for one generation at least will not cover my grave." Men of eighty bear witness that never since they were children has there been grass on the grave.—Westminster Gazette.

"She did not send me a word! Not one word! And that very night she was heartless enough to smile and nod and blush at me at a concert where we were and seemed to think I would see her home the same as ever! Then the next time we met she did not even speak!"

"Are you sure she received it?"

"Yes, I sent it by my brother, and he put it into her own hand. He did not wait for an answer. She could have sent that anyway. Well, then I went away a few weeks. I could not stand it here, and now that I am back it is worse than ever. I despise myself for caring, but I hate Norman Cady for being near her. I thought if I told you, perhaps just putting it into words would wear off some of my anger and help me forget her. Elsie, be good to me and help me forget her. Will you?"

Traveling Incognito.

Some investigator of curious subjects has discovered that the inventor of traveling incognito was Peter the Great of Russia. The next after the famous Russian sovereign to adopt the practice was Joseph II. of Austria, who in 1771 made a little stay in Paris under the title of Count von Falkenstein. During the revolutionary period Louis XVIII. buried his temporarily useless royal dignity under the privacy of Comte de Lille, while Charles X. passed as the Comte de Marles. The Emperor Eugène in his splendor frequently took little trips as the Comte de Pierrefonds.

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The girl touched his arm with her hand.

"You should go to her and have it out in words. There may be some mistake."

"There is no mistake. She was simply playing with me. Elsie, you were always my comrade, so now in time of need!" Elsie laughed, but it hurt her a little.

"Very well, John, come to me whenever you want to. We will talk and walk and you shall try to forget. I will not fail you."

"March was gone and April had had her last day of grace. It was the evening before May day. Elsie, happy hearted, was waiting on the porch in the twilight. John was to come. Now he nearly always came. They were going for another walk in the spring twilight to wander across the green hills and back along the roadways in the white moonlight. Elsie thought only of the moment, but she could not help a little throb of gladness that he so seldom spoke of Rose. She did not, as at first, regret the coolness that had sprung up between her and Rose. Nothing seemed to matter but being happy without thinking why. John called her "sister" half jokingly, but with entire affection, and while he sometimes wandered off inconsolably by himself he seemed content to be with her. And so she waited. As she waited her fifteen-year-old brother called distressingly from his room:

"Sis, for goodness' sake get my good coat from the closet in the hall! I'm going to be late to that party."

Elsie went to the dark closet and emerged with a coat. She knocked at his door.

"Oh, come in and help me with this coat! Great snakes, if you haven't got the wrong coat! Just like a girl! Haven't worn that old thing since winter!" He snatched it from her impatiently upside down. A letter fell from the pocket.

Elsie picked it up, and as she glanced at the address her face went white.

"Terry! What is this?"

At the sound of her voice he turned to look, and then stood stricken with fiery defiance. It was addressed to John Copeland, and in the lower left corner was inscribed in Rose's hand, "Kindness of Terry." Terry stared and struggled with the refractory tie.

"A pretty mess!" Rose gave me that months ago, and I promised to take it straight to John. And like a fool I forgot!" Then he cheered up. "Well, they're off anyway now. Probably she'll be glad he never saw it. I will take it back to her tomorrow." He wondered at the strange brightness of his sister's eyes, at the extreme whiteness of her face.

"Gee! Not even Rose can touch you for looks, Sis. I don't wonder that John!" She turned from him as John's whistle sounded below. She still held the letter.

"I shall give it to John. It is his. I shall tell him you forgot it!"

Then she went down to John.

He sat contentedly on the porch with his hat pushed back on his fair head. He looked careless and happy enough. At her approach he rose.

"Ready, sister?" Her smile was odd, and she held the letter out to him. She spoke as if she had been running:

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